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ON THE
RECENT PROGRESS OF ETHNOLOGY ;

BEING

THE ANNUAL DISCOURSE FOR 1852.

Read before the Ethnological Society, at the Annual Meeting, on 14th May
1852. By RICHARD CULL, Esq., Honorary Secretary.

WE may congratulate ourselves on the continued and increasing interest which the educated classes of society are taking in ethnological knowledge. It is now practically admitted that the science of Ethnology is worthy of being cultivated. It is true that its claims have been tardily admitted ; but we must remember that, in commercial countries, a science which does not promise to be pecuniarily profitable, has not those attractions which ensure the devoted attention of crowds of students.

The desire of the public for systematic knowledge of our science is evinced by the steady demand for the standard works on Ethnology, by the publication of so many new ones, by the popularity of lectures on the subject, and by the frequent introduction of Ethnology as a topic of conversation in general society.

Considerable attention was drawn to our science during the last year by the appearance of so many foreigners in London, who came to visit the Great Exhibition. And to witness the many varieties of man, assembled from every region of the earth, in the Crystal Palace, calmly studying the productions of each other, was not the least of the wonders of that fairy-like creation, whose physical existence is now about to pass away from us.

The differentia, both physical and non-physical, in the varieties of man, are so patent to observation, as not only to attract attention, but to rivet it, and absorb it. Some students, indeed, are unable to advance beyond the study of these differences. They constitute, however, only the threshold of our temple. Resemblances must also be studied. This tendency of the mind to fix itself on the differences in the

varieties of man may be called the student's bias of mind. We occasionally find this bias of mind remaining in after life, and manifesting itself in over-estimating the value of those differences in relation to the resemblances.

Ethnology is a science of yesterday. Daubenton's observations on the situation of the foramen ovale, and Campers' on the facial angle, were the result of researches to discover a physical index to the mental capacity. In 1790 Blumenbach published his *Anatomical Description of Ten Skulls*, in order to shew how certain varieties of man differ from each other in cranial form. In 1820 Blumenbach completed his work, having altogether described sixty-five skulls.

In 1791 Dr. Gall published the first part of an extensive work, in which we see the spirit in which his researches into the moral and intellectual nature of man were conducted. The great and fundamental principle was the comparison of cerebral form with the manifestation of mental qualities. In 1796 Dr. Gall began to lecture at Vienna; and in 1798 we find him complaining, in a letter to his friend, Baron Retzer, that he was called a craniologist. "The proper object of my researches is the brain. The cranium is only a faithful cast of the external surface, and is consequently but a minor part of the principal object." In this letter he speaks of national heads in relation to national character. And to Dr. Gall and his disciples we are most indebted for collecting crania, casts of crania, and casts of heads of the several varieties of man.

Ethnologists have much yet to do in collecting crania from various countries, and still more to do in ascertaining the relationship of these crania to each other, both in time and space. The mere geography of certain forms of cranium is but the first step of a great inquiry. We seek to know if one form of cranium passes into another. If so, under what circumstances, both physical and non-physical, does a mutation of form take place? Our Society might perhaps, with advantage, draw attention to those ethnological questions which require solution to enable us to advance to higher generalizations.

The literature of Ethnology, like that of other sciences,

may be conveniently considered under two general heads, viz. as that which

1. Advances Ethnology; and
2. Diffuses a knowledge of Ethnology.

It is quite true that a work written to advance the science, does also, to a certain extent, diffuse a knowledge of the science; but a work that is written to teach the science does not necessarily advance it, and hence the distinction. During the past year, works have been written with both these objects in view. I proceed briefly to notice them.

Three works on Ethnology from the pen of one of our Fellows, Dr. Latham, have appeared since last May. "The Ethnology of the British Colonies and Dependencies" is a small work, which represents a course of lectures which Dr. Latham delivered at the Royal Institution, Manchester, during February and March 1851. "Man and his Migrations" is another small work, and which also represents a course of lectures which the author delivered at the Mechanics' Institution, Liverpool, in March 1851. These works being devoted to the teaching of what is known, *i.e.* to the diffusion of Ethnological knowledge, require no further notice on this occasion.

Dr. Latham's edition of the *Germania* of Tacitus, with Ethnological dissertations, is a valuable contribution to our science. The object of the work is to exhibit in detail the Ethnology of ancient Germany. The means of effecting this object is the study of the different languages of the families and nations descended from and allied to the Germans of Tacitus. We all know the difficulty of reconciling the Ethnology of Germany at different epochs in the historic period with the *Germania* of Tacitus. The question, as Dr. Latham notices, is not whether certain nations of the *Germaniæ* are rightly placed therein, but whether Tacitus' test of Germanism was the same as ours; and whether, if different, more correct.

We know that nearly the whole of that part of the *Germania* of Tacitus east of the Elbe, as well as certain parts west of the Elbe, were, at the beginning of the proper historical period, *i.e.* in the reign of Charlemagne, not Germanic

but Slavonic. Did Tacitus confound Slavonians with Germans? Did the German population of Tacitus entirely abandon that tract of country, and a Slavonian population take its place? These are questions which Dr. Latham has treated in detail with great ability. The country east of the Elbe was only dimly sketched by Tacitus. The period when it became known in detail, and from personal knowledge, is the reign of Charlemagne. Accurate geographical knowledge of this reign was scarcely possible to Tacitus.

It is not enough, as Dr. Latham remarks, to know how a modern writer classifies the varieties of man. The reader of Tacitus must also know the view that the ancients took of those varieties. The ancients had clear notions of the differences between the group to which they themselves belonged, *i.e.* the Classical group, and the groups to which the so-called *βαρβάρου* belonged. This notion, clear as it was, was limited to one direction. It comprehended only the points of difference. Modern science has extended the notion to comprehend points of resemblance also. The resemblances which brought the Slavonians and Goths into the same group with the Classical stock—the great group called Indo-European, were utterly unknown to the ancients.

“The Unity of the Human Races proved to be the Doctrine of Scripture, Reason, and Science. By Thomas Smyth, D.D.”

This work, which appeared in Edinburgh late last autumn, is a reprint, revised and much enlarged by the author, of the American edition. The American edition grew out of three discourses, and various articles by the same author, which appeared in several Theological Journals in the United States, and which were written to controvert the position of Professor Agassiz, that the origin of the human race is multiform. Professor Agassiz is well known as a profound naturalist, whose opinions are entitled to much respect. As a naturalist, the Professor declares there is no common or several centres of origin for the lower animals, but that they were all created in the localities which they naturally occupy, and in which they breed, either in pairs or multitudes. The same is asserted of man. There is no common central origin

for man, but an indefinite number of separate creations from which the races of man have sprung. The Professor fortifies this opinion by an appeal to the Holy Scriptures. He says the Biblical history of the creation of man is that of only one race, viz. that of Adam; and that Adam and Eve were not the only pair created, nor even the first created of human beings.

Professor Agassiz thinks there was a distinct origin and separate creation for each race, and that each creation took place in that locality which the race naturally occupies.

On these views Dr. Smyth joins issue; and, in some very able and controversial writings and lectures, has strenuously argued for the unity of the human race. Those controversial works have formed the basis of a systematic work, in which he labours to shew, that scripture, reason, and science concur in proving the unity of the human race. Dr. Smyth's eloquent and forcible book partakes in some degree of the controversial spirit, but even with that drawback it is well worthy the attention of ethnologists.

Dr. Smyth devotes three chapters to the statement of the Historical and Doctrinal Evidence of Scripture on the unity of the human race. "This doctrine, be it observed, Scripture teaches us, not as a matter of scientific knowledge, but as the foundation of all human obligation, and of the *universality* of all human charity."—(P. 112.) But as regards ethnological details, "the tenth and eleventh chapters of Genesis are unquestionably the best ethnographical document on the face of the earth."—(P. 100.) The importance of the doctrine to Christianity cannot be overrated; for "it will be at once perceived that the gospel must stand or fall with the doctrine of the unity of the human races."—(P. 112.)

With so high an estimate of the importance of this doctrine to our highest interests, we are prepared for the urgency with which it is advocated. As a theologian, Dr. Smyth places in the front rank his Scripture evidence. "The truth and certainty of the unity of the human races has now, we believe, been established as an incontrovertible fact. It rests upon the unmistakeable evidence of the infallible Word of God, who, in the beginning, made of one blood all the nations

of men to dwell on all the face of the earth." But without bating a jot of the value of his theological argument, Dr. Smyth boldly enters the ethnological arena, fully convinced that ethnological conclusions must be drawn from ethnological data; and, accordingly, he discusses the question "of the nature and philosophy of species," and then ably argues that, "the unity of the races is proved by the unity of the species;" that "the unity of races is proved by their common fertility, and by the infertility of hybrids;" and then grappling with the philological argument that "the unity of the races is proved from the universality, nature, and connection of languages."

Dr. Smyth then quits the scientific data and reasoning, to call in the aid of history and tradition; and thence he appeals to experience, and the insensible graduations of the varieties, as arguments for the unity of the races of men. Dr. Smyth does not evade the difficulties which surround his view of the question. Professor Agassiz, and other mere naturalists, lay great stress upon the fixedness of the physical characters of the several varieties of man, that these characters have been fixed certainly from the earliest dawn of history; whence it is argued that the races of men have *always* been separated by the same amount of differences. Dr. Smyth fairly states the argument of the Professor, and devotes a chapter to the "Origin of the varieties of the Human Species," and this chapter is well worthy of attention. Amongst the interesting portions of the book is an appendix, "On the former Civilization of Black Races of Men;" and a note "On the Veddahs of Ceylon."

In several respects Dr. Smyth's is a remarkable and valuable work. It may be considered as a contribution to the bibliography of our science. It is a compendium of all that has been written on that side of the question. His authorities are duly cited, without any parade of learning, without egotism, without any assumptions of superior sanctity; and with strict impartiality does he state his opponent's views. There is with all this so much originality and deep interest in the subject, that the reader is carried along, without at all thinking of the author himself.

Our associate, Mr. Logan's, *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* continues to record most important information of the Malay and other peoples of that archipelago. The history, antiquities, languages, and ethnology of the Malays is gradually being brought to European knowledge by Mr. Logan, and his band of contributors living at and around Singapore, who are so praiseworthily labouring for science in that distant region.

Mr. Logan's extensive knowledge of Malay dialects gives a peculiar value to his philological researches ; and his intimate knowledge of the physical, intellectual, and moral character of the Malays give him great vantage-ground in his ethnological researches of the Indo-Pacific Islands. The ethnology of the central Malay nations is now becoming more distinct, and is assuming a more definite outline, which will clear the way to a fuller appreciation of the facts connected with the outlying tribes and offshoots which are so widely scattered over the islands of the Pacific. I commend to your especial attention Mr. Logan's researches, which you will find recorded in the 4th and 5th volumes of his *Journal of the Eastern Archipelago*.

Captain Denham is now about to sail with an expedition which is placed under his command to make a survey of certain groups of islands on the east of Australia. We may therefore expect new and valuable details of the Ethnology of that region.

I think the time has now arrived when a report on the Ethnology of the Pacific Islands might be drawn up, by which means special attention would be drawn to the nature and amount of our ignorance of the details of that Ethnology.

We all regretted the early death of Captain Owen Stanley, who died in command of the "Rattlesnake," while on her surveying voyage. Mr. Macgillivray, the naturalist to the expedition, has written an account of the scientific results of the voyage. Very important knowledge has been collected in various departments of science. Amongst others, some valuable contributions have been made to Ethnology. The survey of Torres' Straits was important in a commercial and maritime point of view. The Ethnology of this district, including both

sides of the Straits, Timor, &c., is most important in relation to the great questions of the route of migration of the Malays to people the islands of the Pacific, and that of the black race (Papuans ?) to people North Australia. Materials are now fast collecting, which will, it is hoped, ere long enable us to form some connected view of the Ethnology of this region.

“Steene Bille’s Bericht der Reise der Galathea um die Welt.”

This book is an account of a voyage of discovery round the world of the “Galathea,” a Danish corvette, commanded by Captain Bille.

The great object of the expedition was to obtain more accurate and positive knowledge of the Nicobar Islands, a Danish Colony in the Bay of Bengal, with a view to that Government’s decision as to the expediency of retaining the colony. The “Galathea” proceeded by the Cape of Good Hope to Madras, Calcutta, and these islands. Thence she passed through the Straits of Malacca, to Batavia, the Philippines, China, the South-Sea Islands, and home by Cape Horn.

The Danish edition is in three volumes; the German, by omission of an appendix and other curtailing, is compressed into two volumes. I have only seen the German edition. The voyage occupied two years, from 1845 to 1847, and the delay of publication was caused by the political events which have so much agitated Europe for the last four years. The chief value to us is the very complete account of the Ethnology of the Nicobar Islands. The appendix contains vocabularies of the Nicobar and Negrito languages, which I regret are not in the German edition, and the scientific (ethnological) part has evidently been abridged also. This I regret; for while German is generally read, we find but few who read Danish.

We are indebted to another of our fellows, Dr. Daniell, for gathering important details of the Ethnology of Western Africa. Dr. Daniell has resided for several years on the Guinea Coast, where he has laboured for the advancement of several sciences. His paper on the natives of Old Calabar, printed in our first volume, established his reputation as an ethnologist. His recent papers on Akkrah and Adampé will

sustain that reputation. He has filled up lacunæ in our knowledge of African Ethnology, and we may confidently look for more knowledge as the result of new investigations which he will enter upon on his return, at the end of the month, to Africa. And let me add, that he will have our best wishes for the preservation of his health, and that he may be spared to return to us, and to increase his reputation by enlarging still more the boundaries of our ethnological knowledge of West Africa.




We may also expect additions to our African ethnology from Dr. Overweg's expedition.

"A Manual of Geographical Science. By the Rev. C. G. Nicolay." The several articles of this manual are written by various authors. The article Physical Geography is written by Professor Ansted. The section on the distribution of animals in space and time occupies 48 pages; that on Ethnology occupies 25 pages; so that a very fair proportion of space is allotted to our science. But in so small a space there can only be a sketch of the subject. The sketch is a compilation, chiefly from the works of Dr. Prichard and Colonel Hamilton Smith; and, as might be expected, the sketch is more a description of the geographical distribution of the human family than a manual of Ethnology.

Our science has been advanced, and most valuable materials have been collected for others to advance it, by the Bible and the several Missionary Societies. The philological and other knowledge which those societies have collected together to further the high and noble objects which they have in view, has also been of incalculable value in advancing ethnological science. I need not enumerate the many unwritten languages which the missionaries have been the first to study and reduce to writing. Nor is it necessary to enlarge upon the great patience and ability which is required so to acquire, and afterwards to write, for the works themselves speak louder than any praise of mine. The labours of the missionaries have greatly contributed to advance the bounds of our knowledge in both glossology and grammar.

Colonel Rawlinson has read another memoir to the Royal Asiatic Society, on the Babylonian and Assyrian Inscriptions,

part of which, occupying about 150 pages, has recently been published in the Journal of that Society. The memoir is upon the Babylonian translation of the Great Behistun Inscription. The memoir consists of—1st, The text and an analysis of the Babylonian inscription at Behistun; 2d, An indiscriminate list of Babylonian and Assyrian characters; and, 3d, On the Babylonian alphabet, of which we have only the beginning now published.

It can be shewn, beyond all doubt, that a very large proportion of the Assyrian signs, *i. e.* the arrow-headed characters, are polyphones. “But although I can thus shew the probable reason of the employment of cuneatic polyphones—although I can explain the fact of the character , the ideograph for a ‘country,’ being invested with such discrepant phonetic values as *mat* and *kur*, by referring to the Semitic synonyms  in Chaldee, and  in Arab. (cognate with *χώρα*), the practical inconvenience of such a variableness of power is excessive. The meaning, for instance, of an Assyrian and Babylonian word may be ascertained determinately, either from the key of the trilingual inscriptions, or from its occurring in a great variety of passages with only one signification that is generally applicable; but unless its correspondent can be recognised in some Semitic tongue, it is often impossible, owing to the employment in it of a polyphone character, to fix its orthography. In the multitudinous inscriptions, again, of Nimroud, of Khursabad, of Koyunjik, and of Babylon, of which (although their general application can be detected without much difficulty) the details require for their elaboration a minute philological analysis, this orthographical uncertainty presses on the student with almost crushing severity. On the one side, in working out his readings, he can only employ philological aid,—that is, he can only compare Hebrew or Chaldee correspondents, after being assured of the true sound of the Assyrian and Babylonian word; while on the other, he must depend on his acquaintance with Semitic vocables to fix the fluctuating cuneiform powers.”

The recovery of a long-lost language like the Babylonian, is, of itself, a matter of deep interest, but the consequences

of that recovery, in enabling us to read the numerous inscriptions containing ancient records of Babylonian history, and enabling us also to trace the philological relationships of that language, are consequences of great interest and value to us as ethnologists. It appears that the Babylonian is a Semitic language, and that Biblical Hebrew and Chaldee are the two languages greatly used by Col. Rawlinson to illustrate it. I take this opportunity to refer you to a remarkable passage in the Divinity Lectures of the Rev. W. Digby, Dean of Clonfert. I quote from a copy printed in Dublin in 1787. In Lecture V. the Dean is engaged in shewing that the confusion at Babel was not of language in its ordinary sense, but about religion.

“That the whole earth was of one religion, and *that* the true one, immediately after the flood; when but eight persons were left alive, is not to be disputed. That there was also but one language then spoken, and that a variety of languages did not immediately take place upon the confusion at Babel, but was the slow, gradual, and natural effect of the dispersion, is fairly to be collected from the book of Scripture. Nay, more, that but one language was spoken for several ages after, will, I think, appear from the following circumstances.

“It is allowed on all hands that Canaan, the son of Ham, spoke the same language with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It appears further, that Nimrod, who was grandson to Ham, spake the same language with Asher, the son of Shem; the former in Babylon, the latter in Nineveh.”

The Dean carries on his argument to shew that one language only was spoken up to the time that Joseph was carried into Egypt. And he argues that this universal language was the Mosaic Hebrew. I have quoted the Dean, not to follow his argument in detail, upon which, on the present occasion, I pass no opinion, but to shew that some ground exists why we, as modern philologists, might have been justified in assuming, *à priori*, that should the Babylonian language be recovered, it would be found to be cognate with the Mosaic Hebrew.

It was proposed some years ago to appoint a distinct

Section for the cultivation of Ethnology in the British Association for the Advancement of Science. The proposal was negatived by the Committee of the Association. It was, however, felt that Ethnology is worthier than to occupy a mere subordinate place in the section of Natural History. It has accordingly been removed from that section, and now is united with Geography, which has been removed from Geology, and they together form one section. If by such a union Ethnology were to be degraded into the science of the geographical distribution of the human race, I should never cease to raise my voice against its union. At the Ipswich meeting, last July, Section E, for the cultivation of Geography and Ethnology, met for the first time, and you were duly informed of the results of that meeting at the opening of the session.

I have now rapidly glanced at the progress of Ethnology during the past year. In relation to the whole science, that progress is, fragmentary, but so is the annual progress of every other science. One of the chief uses of reviewing our progress is to draw attention to what is well known, less known, and unknown; for our knowledge and ignorance are so blended as to make a chaos. And in reviewing our position, it would be well to draw up special reports, in order to affix the boundaries of our knowledge, so as to exhibit in its full magnitude our ethnological ignorance, both in relation to space and time.

Common experience in the progress of knowledge shews, that in proportion as the number of students of a science increase, so does a larger number of persons become interested in the advancement of that science, and we find it advance. The history of Mathematics, of the Physical Sciences, of Chemistry, of Geology, of Geography, and other sciences, all concur in shewing that a rapid advancement of the science, both by extension of knowledge, and a fuller comprehension of the laws of nature, invariably follows a wider diffusion of what is already known. Such being a law of relation between the advancement and the diffusion of knowledge, I take the liberty of asking you to aid us in advancing Ethnology, by diffusing as widely as possible a knowledge of it amongst your friends,

and thus to awaken in them an interest in our pursuit. In this way, however small our knowledge may be, and however unable immediately to enter upon original researches ourselves, we may still indirectly conduce to the advancement of our science. And let us not hesitate to pursue our inquiries, lest they should land us in scepticism; for that which refuses to investigate in fear of such a result, is a scepticism of the worst kind, for it is a scepticism whose assumption is, that the words of God are at variance with His works, and will, therefore, continually place Religion and Science in antagonism. Let us remember, in the beautiful language of Spurzheim, that "genuine philosophy and genuine religion are very nearly akin. The one explores the elder volume of nature—the other investigates the later volume of Divine revelation. Both unite in their practical results; both promote the present improvement of man; both conduce to his ultimate felicity."